In this chapter we examine the concept of justice as a never flowing stream and what that means for the church.

**Preliminary considerations:** this section of Amos is offered as an isolate unit, but it is initially set up by earlier proclamations. As the author points out, Amos has already accused the people of lying “in the gate” meaning lying in court (5:10); of afflicting the righteous (those who live by God’s laws), taking bribes and pushing aside the needy at the gate (the place where justice is rendered and where people beg). (5:12) While on the surface these may appear to be generic sins, for God and Amos they are those wins which destroy the community. In the Torah God is creating a community which only works when all people are included in the benefits of that community. This is why there is a jubilee year in which all debts are forgiven and all land returned to its original owners. This is why Hebrews are not to make slaves of their brothers and sisters. This is why people are to speak the truth and deal honestly, because if they do not then the community is broken apart and not all people share in the bounty God offers.

**God hates their worship:** This reality then leads to Amos comments on worship. This is a seven-fold rejection of the worship of God’s people (seven is the perfect number and so signifies complete rejection). The seven rejections are God despises their 1. Festivals, 2. Solemn assemblies 3. Burnt offerings 4. Grain offerings 5. Fatted animals 6. Songs 7. Melody of your harps. Each of these correspond to a particular aspect of worship. Festivals are the three great feasts (Passover, Pentecost and Booths). Assemblies are general worship gatherings. Burnt offerings are those where an animal is offered and is consumed in flames. Grain offerings are offered for particular sins. Fatted animals are those where a portion of the animal is burned and the rest is consumed in a community meal. The songs refer to those Psalms where were used in worship activities. Melody is the accompanying music. This what God dislikes…not because it is evil in and of itself, but because worship is supposed to align God’s people with the justice and righteousness which reflect God’s will for humanity and for the community of God’s people.

**What God wants:** Amos puts it this way: “But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream.” The image here is of continual movement and freshness. In South Texas, like much of the Middle East, there are arroyos or wadis, which are dry stream beds. When there is a rain, these courses fill with water, but when there is no rain, they dry up. In some ways this is the way justice and righteousness appear to work. On occasions, there may be some, but most of the time it is not present. Amos image is that these two forces, justice and righteousness, are continual. They are like the Mississippi, always flowing and positively impacting the lives of God’s people. It is supposed to be continual because this is the way God works in the world. God is continually being faithful to God’s promises of both right relationships (righteousness) and fairness (justice) even when God’s people are not.

**Areas of Injustice:** while the author focuses on water and how we might use it more effectively, I would offer that there are more pressing areas of justice where we might want to get involved if we are to be people who let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream.

1. **Clean water for the world:** the author mentions this and then moves on. This is perhaps one of the greatest needs in the world. Without clean water children die
early, are crippled and blinded and communities are never able to reach their full potential. Our church supports clean water in two ways. First we partnered with the Kenya Mission Group of the Presbytery of Detroit to install a well in Kenya. They are in the process of raising funds once again for another well. A second way we are working with clean water is through Maji Safi, an organization that operates in Tanzania. Their mission statement is "Maji Safi Group is a disease prevention and health promotion project that empowers communities in rural Tanzania to fight waterborne and water-related diseases." We have adopted a village and will be hearing more about them. The question is, what could each PW circle do to help bring clean water to people who need it.

2. **Incarceration:** we in the United States run one of the largest prison systems in the world, much of it private hands. We currently incarcerate almost one quarter of all prisoners in the world and our incarceration rate is the highest in the world as a percentage of population (Russia is second). Most of the persons in our prisons are there for non-violent crimes and the individuals come from poor and working class homes. There are many groups that work on this issue.

3. **Homelessness:** As most of you are aware we host the South Oakland Shelter guests for one week every year. This is one way we can work toward justice, by insuring that these people have a place to stay. There are other ways in which we could expand what we do. Jason Morgan runs the Welcome Inn, a winter day shelter for the homeless, which is housed at Star Presbyterian Church. They are always in need of groups to feed those who meet there (lunch). PW could volunteer to do this. Finally there is the Ruth Ellis Center, a place of respite for LGBT youth with which our church has begun to form a working relationship. You could speak with Hal Bay about how you might assist there.

These are but a few of the many ways in which PW can reach out and let justice flow.

**Questions**

1. How is your circle helping justice flow as a never ending stream?
2. How do you see our worship helping us reach out into the world?
3. How are you working to insure clean water for all?